

THE WORK AHEAD FOR THEOSOPHISTS

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BY

C. JINARÂJADÂSA

President of the Theosophical Society

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My Brothers:

Will you rise while I repeat the Invocation to the Great Ones made by Dr. Besant at the opening of Conventions:

May Those, who are the embodiment of Love Immortal, bless with Their protection the Society established to do Their Will on earth; may They ever guard it by Their Power, inspire it with Their Wisdom and energize it with Their Activity.

My Brothers:

I ask you to repeat in unison the "Golden Stairs," transmitted to us by H.P.B. from a Master of the Wisdom:

A clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, an unveiled

* Inaugural address delivered on February 17, 1946.

spiritual perception, a brotherliness for all, a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction, a courageous endurance of personal injustice, a brave declaration of principles, a valiant defence of those who are unjustly attacked, and a constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection which the Sacred Science depicts—these are the Golden Stairs up the steps of which the learner may climb to the Temple of Divine Wisdom.

Be seated.

The Theosophical Society, beginning with a small nucleus in 1875 in New York of 16 interested persons, is today a world-wide organization. Up to the outbreak of the war, the International Society was composed of 48 National Societies each with its own administration. Expositions of Theosophy were being given, here in India in ten languages, and in other parts of the world in twenty more. What binds us, of nearly all races and creeds, is an abiding eagerness to understand every aspect of Truth, religious, scientific, philosophic and artistic, in order that, growing nobler in character, we may take part in the affairs of men so as to diminish little by little the sum total of

human misery, ignorance and cruelty. We have been led in this task during the last seventy years by three Presidents of the Society, Henry Steel Olcott, Annie Besant and George Sydney Arundale. It is my duty, now, at your command, to lead you.

If Theosophy were a cut and dried philosophy statable in books and teachings, or originated by Teachers whom none must challenge, the Society would not have grown to be world-wide as it is today, Theosophy the Divine Wisdom as we possess it today is only that small body of Truth which underlies the everchanging facts, not only of our globe and of our Humanity, but of the whole Cosmos ; we cannot by any imagination conceive of even the greatest of Adepts knowing the complete Divine Wisdom which explains every problem of this vast Universe of a million million solar systems. But we have already received a part of the Wisdom from Adept Teachers in the past ; they have given us the religions and the philosophies ; we have yet to receive more, and how much more, what mind can say ? We are receiving today new fragments of the Wisdom in what Science is discovering in every field of investigation ; here and there we gain glimpses also in the creations of the great poets and artists of the world. We Theosophists possess to commence with a body of truths known as

Theosophy ; our greatest adventure in life is to discover more of Truth, for "There is no religion higher than Truth." And we hope to discover more, not for ourselves, but in order "to lift a little of the heavy Karma of the world."

In this search for Truth, there is none first and none last ; all are equal and brothers, and the discoveries of all are needed for the full integration of Truth. It is because of that fact that I, as an individual Theosophist though President of the Society, can address you at this inaugural meeting, and outline to you along what lines I hope to discover with your aid new aspects of Theosophy, and how, with what we already know, and with what we shall know as the years pass, we can work together towards a fuller realization of our First Object, "To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour." We have already done much towards that realization ; in some ways perhaps we are the only organization that has so far succeeded. But we need only look at the chaotic social and economic conditions of the world today, and the spirit of war inherent in them, to realize how much harder we all need to work in order to make Brotherhood a "living power" in our lives and in that of others.

In order to make the world better we have to understand the causes of its miseries. These were analysed for us in 1881 by one of the greatest of the Adepts who is known by the title of Mahâ-Chohan. In a communication which He then sent to a leading Theosophist, Mr. A. P. Sinnett, the author of *The Occult World*, the Adept first pointed to contrasted conditions then existing, which still exist today. They are first, blind, ignorant religious superstition among the millions everywhere, who hope with prayers and offerings to escape the consequences of their sinning by propitiations of deities great and small; and secondly as its opposite, Materialism in all its forms, preaching the doctrine that man is only the body that perisheth, with no surviving consciousness whatsoever. These two manifestations of the human mind, exploited on the one side by priests of religion threatening the masses with divine wrath and especially with an eternal damnation hereafter, and on the other by the priests of science wiping out of human affairs all landmarks of morality and proclaiming in brief, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow ye die," have, says the Adept, created a situation where the struggle for existence has become keener than ever for all. There is a furious rush to crowd into one life-time all that man craves of happiness; this is especially the

case with the sceptical intellectual classes of the West.

Francis Bacon, the Father of modern science, once dreamed that the future of science is "to endow the condition and life of man with new powers or works," and "to extend more widely the limits of the power and greatness of man." It is stupefying to contemplate how instead, the achievements of science which have enabled industry to provide for us ever new commodities and conveniences, have also year by year, as science has advanced, made the struggle for life more fratricidal. The strife between man and man, even for mere subsistence, is keener today than it was a century ago; more millions are being exploited today by capital through the power created for it by science.

Now, those of us who have witnessed the devastation of two great world wars, and all of us who see what may be in store for humanity with the release of atomic power, realize that mankind's troubles are more deep-seated than ever. And we have to witness the tragic fact that the great religions, once a source of inspiration for all human problems, have failed mankind in this crisis. Religion has "bypassed" humanity, or if you will, humanity has "bypassed" religion.

It is in this situation that we Theosophists have a vital role to play; that role is no less a task than to diminish the intensity of struggle for all mankind. How is this superhuman task to be achieved?

This work is to be done by us by resuscitating in the religions a divine Truth as to man and God that has been so overlaid by the dust of ages as to be completely forgotten as a living factor in daily religious thought and conduct. We know that divine Truth well here in India in the proclamation of the sages that God and man are one, not two. *Tat tvam asi*, "THAT art thou" is still found written in the scriptures; but it is trampled underfoot by the human institutions which Hindu religion has created and sustained. What more ghastly denial of "THAT art thou" could there be than the treatment meted out throughout the ages to the outcaste Depressed Classes, now termed Harijans, the "children of God"? Changing the label has not changed the desecration of a divine Truth.

This same truth that God and man are one exists in some other religions also, but mostly as an esoteric doctrine. Said Jesus Christ, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches," "At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." Said His greatest disciple, St. Paul, "Christ in you, the hope

of glory." Traditions of this wonderful revelation, that there is no eternal chasm between the nature of God and the nature of man, are found everywhere.

Thus in Buddhism also, as it is understood in Tibet, China and Japan, the same mystic truth is proclaimed. The teaching is given to all, that in each human being exists a Bodhisattva Principle, so that each who desires to tread the Way of the Buddhas, necessitating heroic efforts life after life for hundreds of lives, in order to teach mankind the Great Law, can achieve the stupendous height of being a Tathâgata, a Saviour of mankind, for Bodhi, Supreme Wisdom and Compassion, is at the root of his being.

It is by basing our work on this truth, the eternal Rock of Ages, that we Theosophists can help mankind. If I have the nature of God within me, if somewhere in the recesses of my heart and mind, I can see a Divine Light shining within me, and not external to me as when I am engaged in religious worship under the guidance of priestly leaders and teachers, then it follows that Divine *Happiness* also resides within me. I am then not only "the Way, the Truth and the Life," I am also the fount of Happiness. Convince men that the fount of Happiness is within themselves, then little by little the struggle for life diminishes. What does it matter that I am poor, that I am ailing,

that I am oppressed, if I have within me the key to open the Treasure House of Happiness? In daily life then, it is not what I earn that matters, not what I own which is the standard of worth; but what I am as pure and unsullied by greed, as charitable in heart and mind to all, as radiating friendship to bird, beast, tree, shrub and flower.

It is not an easy task to discover, in the words of St. Paul, "the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." It is to this task we are called. Divine Truth, Divine Beauty, Divine Tenderness, and every factor of hope and glory that is conveyed by the one word Mukti, or Nirvana, or Salvation, all these reside in ourselves. Could only men be aware of them, the search for their realization will be found as the only way to Happiness. We Theosophists have to instruct mankind as to this new way. It was said in China: "If you have two loaves, sell one and buy a lily." To possess a second loaf is only greed; but to contemplate the beauty of a lily is to realise that the lily's beauty, as all other forms of beauty, are in myself too. It was said in Japan, when one's life is so utterly desperate—as sometimes it was when your feudal lord ordered you to commit hara-kiri—or as sometimes when the course of true love for two lovers is crossed by fate, and suicide

seems the only way out of undiminishable misery, then, said the Japanese sage, "Do not weep; you are but reaping the Karma of evil deeds of a past life; but make a *graceful* exit; create out of your tragedy an exquisite poem, and leave it on the bank before you drown yourself; perform your hara-kiri in the midst of friends to the music of doleful chants, and in a ceremony that has dignity." You see the main theme in these strange doctrines of China and Japan; it is not outward circumstances that matter, but one's reaction to them.

I do not want to give the impression that I would advise anyone to commit suicide to escape from his troubles. An understanding of the facts concerning life after death shows that to commit suicide is to "fly out of the frying pan into the fire," for however keen is the suffering while alive, yet it is to some extent deadened by the physical brain. When free of that brain which offers a resistance to the acuteness of suffering, he who commits suicide feels far more keenly the edge of his sufferings, I have quoted the advice of the Japanese sage only to illustrate the point that life must be *creative* of truth and beauty not only when we are happy, but also when we are in the profoundest misery.

To create intense happiness from within our souls, such a happiness as will compensate us for the hardships of life—that is the lesson that we Theosophists have to learn, and to teach. The magic phrase, “Open Sesame,” lies in that one word, *Create*. Even a child knows its secret; see how busy he is with his mud or sand, or the puddle in the gutter; we say he is playing. No, he is creating; he is reaching out into the recesses of being, and rejoicing that he can do something that gives him joy. So too, we can all learn to create. Every poet creates, for the word means one who fashions; every artist is as a crucible into which is poured the mingled dross of life’s transient happinesses and miseries, and he melts and transmutes them in the fire of his imagination, and bodies forth a work of art that is for a while not alone his own Mukti or Salvation, but makes young men see visions and old men dream dreams of their eternal joy and salvation.

It was said by Solomon about the Wisdom, “sweetly doth she order all things,” Wisdom is a power. It is for this reason that Theosophy is not an intellectual philosophy, but a generating station of power. Each Theosophical Lodge should become a power-plant generating ideas, especially the ideas which the world needs today to lessen the struggle

for existence. Take for instance, the most powerful and dynamic idea which we Theosophists have as our "marching orders"—the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. Only imagine a world peopled in the majority with men and women who not only believe but have discovered the joys inherent in that principle; would a man or woman then care to ask to what race another belongs, to what God he or she bends the knee? The one joyous truth which the stranger brings with him is then; "You are my brother, I am your brother." How could wars ever arise in such a civilisation? How could poverty exist as contrasted with callous luxury? These human evils, the source of the struggle for existence, disappear, as the morning mists disappear with the rising of the sun.

Suppose in addition, every Theosophist in every Theosophical Lodge were to say softly to himself as he meets friend or stranger, "THAT art thou, the Vision of God that I seek, the goal of Mukti which I long for, art thou." All our Theosophical studies then are a mere accompaniment, an elaboration in harmonies, of the glorious chant of Unity which rings throughout the universe linking angel and man, beast and plant, in one joyous embrace.

Imagine too Theosophical Lodges not only studying the Wisdom in books, but also trying to express what

they know in poems and songs ; holding study classes not to study " teachings," but to teach the newcomer the art of creating out of the experiences which he has had in life some glimpses of truth about his own Divine Self, and too about the nature of those Fragments of that Divine Self who are the men, the women, and the children around him. The word Theosophist then undergoes a change ; it signifies not one who belongs to a Society, but one who has learnt how, as did once upon a time the sages in India, to create new hymns of new Vedas, in singing which the world of the Angels joins with the world of men ; to create statues as did Phidias and Praxiteles in Greece to contemplate which gave the utmost solace to every troubled heart ; to paint pictures as did Turner, showing in the colours of the sky the light that never is on land or sea ; to create dances in looking at which we gain a far away glimpse of the Cosmic Rhythm in which all creation moves.

Think too of the Theosophist as one who notes the outline and tint of every leaf, of every feather, marvelling at the transcendent workmanship of the Demi-urgos, the Divine Artificer ; as one who gazes at each flower as a window into another Land where exist for him adventure after adventure in love and life ; think of him supremely as one who looks at the faces of

children, each as a sentence with a new message that Goodness, Truth and Beauty are one, and that though God when embodied as man or woman is dazzling in beauty, there is another order of Divine Beauty to dazzle the heart and mind in a child's face.

My Brothers, helped by the Teachers and their teachings of the past, we must create new Wisdoms, new Theosophies, so that we are known not as the professors of a creed, not as the followers of teachers, but as men and women busy, strenuously, but also with the sense of joy, creating new ways of happiness for mankind. Then shall men little by little discover that the Kingdom of Righteousness, the Garden of Happiness, are within their own hearts and minds; then will they cease to clamber and struggle for outer delights; for how then should a man delve into the depths of the earth to find jewels, when in his own hand is the key to the Treasure House of all jewels possible?

It is in these new ways that we who are pledged to the work of the Theosophical Society must work "to lift a little of the heavy Karma of the world." Each of us bears a torch to show the path to Happiness for others.

A time will come, though you and I will see it only in our next incarnation, when the curses called competition

and the struggle for life, which dog the footsteps of mankind today, will have been as evil dreams of the night. You and I are working to create that new day's light and that happiness for all, when there shall be no distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour; when men know and rejoice in the only supreme fact of their immortal life as Souls, as gravity is the supreme fact of their earthly bodies, that Happiness is within themselves, that the Way to Salvation starts from their own hearts, and that they need no temple or priest or book to show them the road. For they will have discovered that the Way, the Truth, the Life and the Joy are inseparable from the essential nature of every man, woman and child.

My Brothers, we shall succeed in our stupendous task. We shall achieve our dream. For we work, but *not alone*. With us stand the Great Saviours of the world who have gone before us. Their Blessing is with us; Their Strength will uphold us, as, in Their name and for the love of mankind, we go forth into the world to lessen the load of human misery.

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